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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BAGHDAD 002217

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SUBJECT: BAGHDAD'S CHANGING BOUNDARIES

REF: A) BAGHDAD 1588 B) BAGHDAD 2040 C) BAGHDAD 2044

Classified By: ACTING POLCOUNS ROBERT GILCHRIST FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

11. (C) SUMMARY: The Baghdad Governor and Provincial Council (PC) initiated a plan to adjust the city's district boundaries in early May; this plan may exacerbate sectarian tensions if new districts reflect and entrench the recent displacement of people in the city, away from mixed areas and into closed sectarian enclaves. Or it may decrease sectarian violence by diminishing sectarian competition for local and national resources. According to Mazin Makiya, Chairman of the Provincial Council Strategic Planning Committee, the plan is designed to respond to population shifts that have occurred during the past 30 years. Through an adjustment process requiring many months, the Governor and the PC also seek to combine the contending borders of administrative, service, and political districts into a single system. Post and Baghdad PRT will continue to investigate the evolving plans to change Baghdad's boundaries, and the impact of those plans on sectarian conflict in the province. This is the third in a series of cables (Refs B, C) from Post and Baghdad PRT that examine the influence of the structure of Baghdad governance on sectarian tension. END SUMMARY.

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AN EXERCISE IN URBAN PLANNING  
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12. (C) Members of the Baghdad Provincial Council (PC) initiated a review of the province's administrative boundaries in early May. According to Makiya, PC members recognize that the process of redrawing district boundaries requires careful thought and planning. Makiya told PRToff that city leaders have not changed district boundaries since the 1970s, despite decades of rampant population growth without proper urban planning. The PC thus launched with the Governor's office a joint plan to re-draw Baghdad's boundaries. The plan involves an assessment phase, a review phase, and an implementation phase. The PC Strategic Planning Committee began the assessment phase by tasking local leaders to survey their communities and report areas of recent population growth. When complete, this plan will be reviewed by the Governor, the Amanat, and officials from the Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works (MMPW). The Provincial Council will then vote on the final plan, and oversee its implementation. Makiya said the PC has not set a timetable for this process; it could take several months or a year to complete.

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CHANGING BAGHDAD'S ADMINISTRATIVE BOUNDARIES  
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13. (SBU) The plan seeks first to adjust the boundaries of administrative districts. Through a survey of local leaders, the PC aims to determine how many areas to re-classify as nahias (neighborhoods) or qadas (city boroughs). A village

graduates to nahia status when it crosses a population threshold. Nahia status qualifies a former village for additional services and resources, initially distributed through a newly appointed 'muldeer nahia' (akin to deputy ward boss). A nahia, in turn, attains qada status when its population increases a sufficient amount. Qadas acquire a qa'im makam to distribute their increased services and resources. The PC also plans to redraw the borders of some existing nahias and qadas, in accordance with the growth and movement of populations.

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CHANGING BAGHDAD'S SERVICE BOUNDARIES  
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¶4. (SBU) Between 2003 and 2006, four District Advisory Councils (DACs) asked the Provincial Council (PC) to institute a new Amanat service district to serve each of their areas. The PC voted in favor of all of the requests, and the Amanat approved them. The Amanat then established a new office within each existing service district, splitting them into two parts: the old Amanat office served one part of the district, and the new office served the other part. This process split Sadr City, Rasheed, Kadhamiya, and Adhamiya into two separate service districts. Recently, the Provincial Council and the Amanat moved to divide 9 Nissan and Karadah as well.

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NOT (YET) CHANGING BAGHDAD'S POLITICAL BOUNDARIES  
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¶5. (C) The CPA initially designed the council system to ensure that each service district had a corresponding

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political district. The existing and proposed changes, however, bring the total number of service districts in central Baghdad to 15, while the number of political districts remains at nine. Moreover, the new service districts of the Amanat do not align with Baghdad's Administrative boundaries. According to Makiya, the assessment launched by the Strategic Planning Committee seeks to identify these many inconsistencies and to propose a plan to rectify them. Makiya said that the Governor and the PC ultimately seek to combine the borders of administrative, service and political districts into a single boundary system.

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COMMENT: CAUSES FOR CONCERN ABOUT RE-DISTRICTING  
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¶6. (C) Makiya has assumed a leadership role in the process of re-districting Baghdad. He is a proven moderate technocrat (see Ref A for biographical information). During a conversation with PRToff May 5, he responded to a direct question about possible Shia gains from the process with a strong denial of any sectarian agenda in re-drawing Baghdad's district boundaries. He claimed that he would refuse to take part in re-districting if it involved a sectarian agenda. His independent credentials lend credibility to this assertion.

¶7. (C) Nonetheless, sectarian strife has already influenced the re-districting process. Some DACs requested a new Amanat office because sectarian violence prevented the delivery of essential services to large portions of their district. The old Amanat office in Adhamiya, for instance, currently serves the south side of the district, which has become predominantly Sunni since the major populations shifts that commenced in March 2006. Over time, sectarian violence diminished the Amanat's capacity to serve the north side of the district, which has become predominantly Shia, from their office located in the south side of the district. Noting this change, the Shia who dominate the Adhamiya DAC requested

and received a new Amanat office in the north part of the district. By contrast, Sadr City appears to have split into two service districts for practical reasons; two Amanat offices can more efficiently provide services to Sadr City's approximately two million residents than could one office.

¶18. (C) Because they dominate the PC and outnumber Sunnis in Baghdad, Shia parties currently control the re-districting process (Reftel B). They have the power to gerrymander new districts to ensure as many Shia-majority districts as possible. This outcome could significantly exacerbate sectarian tensions by creating a 'separate but unequal' system of government, wherein the majority group systematically deprives minorities of access to city services and resources. Amanat officials who can hire and fire new workers also wield considerable patronage power.

¶19. (C) Regardless of the intentions of those leading the re-districting process, new service districts will likely reflect the increasing segregation of the city along sectarian lines. The creation of new districts may thus help to entrench the recent displacement of people in the city, away from mixed areas and into closed sectarian enclaves. Moreover, segregated districts will deprive local leaders from different sects of an increasingly rare forum for peacefully resolving conflicts -- the mixed-sect District Advisory Council (DAC). In the Adhamiya DAC, for instance, the Shia Chairman and the Sunni Deputy Chairman currently work together to find common ground for the people of their district. If new districts create segregated political groupings, formal political structures will lose their power to facilitate reconciliation.

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COMMENT: REASONS TO SUPPORT RE-DISTRICTING  
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¶10. (C) It is also possible that re-districting will decrease sectarian violence by diminishing sectarian competition for local and national resources. It may make local government more receptive to local needs by removing the complication of sectarian strife, and may diminish movement between different sectarian areas to either provide or receive essential services. These factors may improve the effectiveness of local government, thereby increasing confidence in the city government. In the case of the Adhamiya DAC, the creation of a new Amanat office in the Shia neighborhood of Shula permits those residents to deal directly with their service office without crossing into the Sunni neighborhood where the DAC hall is located.

¶11. (C) In addition, by concentrating the power of

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minorities into smaller districts where they will form the majority and therefore control local political entities, re-districting may also empower non-Shia political leaders to lobby more effectively for resources from the Provincial Council and Council of Representatives than they can, currently, as minority representatives within Shia-majority DACs.

¶12. (C) Local governance in Baghdad is hindered by a lack of clarity in administrative boundaries and confused jurisdictions of various governmental institutions. Rampant population growth, regardless of sectarian make-up, necessitates some sort of urban planning. In light of their professionalism and openness, at this point the Baghdad PC seems to be moving in a positive direction with this initiative. Post and Baghdad PRT will continue to investigate this evolving plan to change Baghdad's boundaries, and any potential impact of this initiative on either lessening or aggravating the sectarian conflict we see in Baghdad.  
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